DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 626 FL 022 274

AUTHOR Oladejo, James
TITLE Problems and Prospects of ESP in Multilingual Learning-Contexts: An Alternative Approach.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the SEAMEO RELC Conference (28th, Singapore, April 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; *English for Special Purposes; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Language Attitudes; Language Teachers; Multilingualism; Secondary Education; *Second Language Instruction; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Papua New Guinea

ABSTRACT

This paper examines some of the problems that are faced by teachers and students in the teaching and learning of English for special purposes (ESP) in multilingual nations such as Papua New Guinea. A survey of 125 students recently admitted to the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea found that although 98 percent knew that English was the sole language of instruction at the institution, only 49 percent expected to study English as a subject in any form as part of their curriculum. Many students looked upon English as a subject of study necessary only to gain entrance into the university, and had little motivation to study it past the secondary level. Other problems faced by teachers and students include the multilingual background of the learners, lack of cooperation from teachers of other subjects, the need to import language materials, poor levels of language teacher training, and large class sizes. An alternative approach to ESP is suggested, one in which the learner's native language and other languages in the learner's environment play a major role in tertiary education. The importation of culturally and educationally irrelevant materials is noted along with the urgent need for teacher training reform. (MDM)

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ED 371 626

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ESP IN MULTILINGUAL LEARNING CONTEXTS: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Dr James Oladejo (Senior Lecturer)
Department of Language and Communication Studies
University of Technology
Lae, Papua New Guinea

Tel: 675-434752
Fax: 675-457415/675-457473

(Paper presented at the 28 RELC Conference, Singapore, April 1993).

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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ESP IN MULTILINGUAL LEARNING CONTEXTS: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

James Oladejo

ABSTRACT

This paper examines some of the problems which are faced by teachers and students alike in the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes in multilingual nations. It observes that in addition to the fact that, for the majority, the language is often a tool for achieving a purpose, namely educational attainment, learners at the post secondary school level often feels unmotivated to want to learn more English, especially as they feel that it is an unnecessary burden. In addition, the multilingual background of the learners, lack of co-operation from teachers of other subjects, importation of materials, poor teacher training, and large classes are some of the formidable problems which ESP has faced in many parts of the English as a second language speaking world.

In view of the numerous difficulties identified, the paper suggests an alternative approach to ESP, one in which the learner's mother tongue as well as other languages in the learner's environment are allowed to play a major role as part of their tertiary education. It further suggests that the importation of culturally and educationally irrelevant materials and inadequate teacher training need an urgent attention.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ESP IN MULTILINGUAL LEARNING CONTEXTS: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

1. Introduction

In this paper an attempt is made to identify some of the major problems facing the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in multilingual/multicultural settings, and which have made this approach to English language learning less successful, despite its theoretically sound base and its relatively long history. It will be argued that language for specific purposes (LSP) be adopted as a viable alternative to ESP as a way of overcoming the problems and challenge posed by ESP alone in multilingual English speaking situations.

Although ESP as a teaching approach began about three decades ago (Johns 1988), its overall success in multilingual/ multicultural settings in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific has not been very impressive. Yet, such multilingual/multicultural communities constitute by far the largest majority of the English speaking world today. That ESP has not achieved the much anticipated success is evident in several ways. First is the often heard complaints of employers about the lack of competence of their employees in communicating in English at work. Many employers often have to spend considerable amounts of money retraining their staff on work related language and communication skills which the employees are supposed to have acquired through ESP courses at colleges and universities. Secondly, there is a growing body of evidence that many graduates as well as undergraduates of science and technology who have had a period of training in ESP often feel more comfortable with their mother tongues or some other lingua franche than with English, both in their studies and in communicating with colleagues at work (Swan 1986, Swan and Lewis 1990, Moody 1993). It is obvious, therefore, that although students may have passed their ESP courses, they make less use of the language in communication situations where the use of the language would have been expected. Similarly, the student's success

in such courses in colleges and universities does not always necessarily imply competence in work related English or the ability to communicate with ease in the language. Could it then be that ESP is not the magic needed in order to equip the student with the specific language and communication skills s/he needs in his/her chosen career in a multilingual speech community ?

A careful examination of the numerous factors which influence ESP learning and teaching in multilingual/multicultural situations is necessary in order to come to grip with this problem, and find solutions to them. Among these factors are lack of motivation on the part of the student of ESP, poor educational and linguistic backgrounds, lack of professionalism in the teaching of ESP, unhelpful confrontation, and sometimes undeserved suspicion, on the part of the science and technology teacher towards his counterpart teaching English for science and technology, exposure to different linguistic models, cultural differences which make some of the activities and materials in ESP impracticable in some learning contexts, large class size, and the inappropriateness of some ESP courses in meeting the specific needs of the learner.

2. Learners' Expectations and Motivation

The attitudes of the science and technology student towards the English language often leaves much to be desired. For some students, having to learn English is seen as mere additional, even unnecessary, hurdle in the way of obtaining their certificates. Consequently, the learner's attention and interest in learning the language is somewhat hostile rather than co-operative. Such negative attitudes to the language can be explained in at least two ways.

First, it is probably natural for a student of science and technology to be disappointed, or even frustrated, upon discovering that English is an indispensable part of his academic career in the university. After all, for many who might have found secondary school

English a tough subject, being admitted into the university might have brought a sigh of relief at the completion of secondary education. For such students, therefore, the mere mention of English as a compulsory subject could evoke anger and revulsion, particularly so when English is as important as Mathematics, Physics or any other core subject the learner is taking.

A survey of 125 students recently admitted to study Bachelor of Technology degrees at the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea shows that a vast majority (98%) knew before being admitted that English is the sole medium of instruction in the university, but only 49% of the population expected to study English as a subject in any form as part of their academic curriculum. The majority of the samples (72%) feel that English should not be a compulsory subject for three out of four years of their study in the university. Rather, they feel that one to two years of English classes would be sufficient to adequately equip them with the level of competence required for their study. Indeed, 65% of the samples are of the opinion that their current level of competence in the language is adequate for their needs in tertiary education, despite obvious indications to the contrary.

In all, only 28% are of the opinion that studying English is important and necessary beyond the first year in the university. Although the foregoing figures might be somewhat disturbing, especially in a situation where there is sufficient evidence that the learners' competence in the English language is less than adequate for their study needs, the important points for us here are two. First, with the majority of students feeling that they do not need to learn any more English at the university level, it is obvious that at the time of starting university studies in science and technology, such students would be psychologically unprepared for further formal study of the language. Second, and as a result of that lack of psychological preparation, one must be in doubt as to whether such students would be positively disposed towards the English language courses in the curriculum.

Another reason why the science and technology student may not be happy with English language courses is that, in sharp contrast to what obtains in predominantly monolingual English speaking societies, the need for English as language of day-to-day communication in multilingual societies is often minimal, and much less so at work for the science and technology graduates who often have access to other languages (lingua franche) in which they feel more comfortable and through which they can communicate with colleagues at work. The reduced utilitarian value of English in social interaction, especially outside of formal education, would naturally suggest to the learners that any attempt to make them learn English is a mere temporary trouble which they have to undertake in order to obtain the anticipated certificates and degrees. Obviously, such learners would not aim at any permanent retention of whatever little they acquire of such a necessary evil, nor would they work hard enough relative to their core courses.

Another question addressed by the survey questionnaire was on which aspects of the language which the students would like to have teaching emphasis on. The majority of the respondents (63%) felt that they needed further instructions mainly in pronunciation. Although the English language and communication courses for this group of students are designed on the assumption that they need further training in several other aspects of the language including report writing, and effective oral presentation, pronunciation per se is not a main area of interest. It seems therefore that the expectations of the learners from these courses are not exactly the same as those offered by the curriculum. The implication of this for the learners' attitudes and motivation towards such language and communication courses is obvious. For unless the learners feel that their desires and aspirations are being met by the courses they are required to take, their perception of such courses and their reaction to them might be negative.

3. Learners' Linguistic Background

In addition to the problem of poor motivation and negative attitudes towards the learning of English by students of science and technology in developing multilingual countries, learners' poor linguistic and educational background is also a major difficulty in the way of successful ESP learning. As Hawes (1989) rightly observes, since the world economy entered into a recession in the early 80's, the developing and underdeveloped countries have been hard hit. Partly as a result of this situation, and partly due to the low priority given to education in the fiscal planning of these nations, education in general and English language learning in particular have suffered (Oladejo 1991).

It is no exaggeration, therefore, to conclude that students entering the university today in most of these countries are worse than their counterparts of the 1970's and 80's. Of particular interest is the decline in the learners' level of competence in the English language, the official medium of instruction at secondary and post secondary levels in most of these countries. The trend noted for Papua New Guinea by Kavana (1981), which others have also identified in many publications, is therefore not unique to that country. Students enter the university with poor background in the English language in other developing multilingual countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia, and Brunei. Consequently, in the majority of these countries' universities, remedial courses are offered in English to enable students to cope with the academic and communication demands in the language which tertiary education places upon their linguistic capacity. When the problem of poor financing of education is added to the fact that, in many of these countries the competence of the English language teacher himself/herself is often very poor, then the magnitude of the problem relating to learner's background becomes clearer. For many of the second language learners in such situations, it is simply a matter of the blind leading the blind.

4. The Teacher Factor

If lack of motivation on the part of the ESP student is an impediment to learning, the fact

that the learner in multilingual learning situation is often unavoidably exposed to varied models of the English language is an additional problem. Although in some other matters of life the availability of varieties ought to be a useful resource, exposing the learner to various conflicting models of a second language in a multilingual situation is more of a liability than asset.

A survey of students' opinions on which of the models of English they would like to adopt from among those they are exposed to through lectures and tutorials shows that the majority prefer the way their own nationals speak the language. The reason given for their preference is mainly that such speakers of the language speak in a way that the learners themselves are used to. Whatever model they adopt, one thing is clear, learners are often confused and unsure, at least initially, about which of the competing models is best. Many eventually end up sticking to the same model of the language as they were used to before taking ESP courses. But perhaps more serious than the issue of choosing a model is the indirect effect the availability of a large variety of models has on learners' motivation. It is often the case that, although the English language proficiency of some foreign teachers is not high, many of these often have higher degrees in their specialized disciplines. This paradox creates a situation in which the student of science and technology could be misled into believing that competence in the English language is of a secondary importance, as long as he/she could do well in the main subjects. After all, their own lecturers are good examples of scientists despite their less than adequate competence in English.

Strevens (1988) also identifies teacher preparations and special teaching materials as essential to the success of ESP. On teacher preparation, it is obvious that adequate training in both linguistics and the art of teaching is essential. In this connection, it is often the case that in many multilingual societies, particularly in the developing and underde-

veloped countries, which constitute the majority of multilingual/multicultural English speaking societies, there is an obvious lack of professionalism on the part of the teacher, and in the absence of this professionalism, the success of ESP is in serious doubts. In many of these countries, teacher preparation is inadequate not only for ESP but also for general English and many other subjects. Inadequate attention to the preparation of teachers has been a perennial problem in many of these societies partly as a result of economic problems and partly because of misplacement of priorities, as a result of which education in general and teacher education in particular have become matters of secondary concern to authorities (Oladejo 1991, Hawes, ibid). If the case of the blind leading the blind in English language teaching at the primary and secondary schools is very disturbing, then the continuation of the trend in post secondary education is not only absurd but also irritating. After all, it is at this level that one would expect the learner to have mastered the language to be able to cope adequately well in virtually every aspect of his working life.

Yet, it is not unusual to find in the ESP classroom teachers who themselves ought to be students of English in the class they supposedly teach. Some of these have no basic training either in the English language or in the teaching of it, and in most cases they take up ESP teaching as a form of employment alternative to what they were trained for. It is these categories of untrained teachers who often find it difficult to see the difference between the wood and the forest in ESP. Indeed, some might be so unfamiliar with ESP that the first time they ever came in contact with that acronym was in an advertisement calling for applications for the job. While it is possible to argue that such "convert" teachers of ESP would learn the art of the job as they along, one wonders if such learning would not amount to mere tinkering, an exercise akin to strengthening a structure which has no foundation in the first place. In this connection, therefore, one must argue that the ESP teacher needs to not only know the art of teaching (Sukiwiwat 1981), but he/she must also possess an explicit knowledge of the system of the language he/she is supposed to teach. Graduates of diverse disciplines such as law and administration have

no business in the ESP classroom, therefore, unless they are also trained linguists. Unfortunately, it is these categories of teachers who claim to be ESP specialists in many developing multilingual societies today. The loser in such a game of unprofessional deception is not only the ESP student, who is unlucky enough to be a guinea-pig of crude experimentations in the hands of untrained practitioners. The ESP profession itself stands to be assaulted as a result of its own failure to discriminate between the trained practitioner and the quark in the ESP classroom.

5. Lack of co-operation from non-ESP teachers

Another important factor in ESP learning is in terms of the co-operation received by the ESP teacher from those of other subjects, especially in science and technology. The co-operation of the teachers of other subjects is relevant in determining not only the attitudes of the learner to the language but also how much of it he/she eventually learns. Strevens (ibid) notes three disadvantages of pre-ESP English courses for Science and Technology students which have made the learning of the language laborious. One of these is the negative attitudes of the teachers of language to Science and Technology. While the ESP teacher of today may no longer be guilty of such an accusation, it is the teacher of science and technology subjects whose attitudes towards the ESP teacher often leave much to be desired. Although the language teacher is primarily responsible for the teaching of the subject contents of the ESP course, the job of monitoring learners' performance and progress in the language cannot be left to the teacher ESP alone. Indeed, any progress can be best assessed by the core subject teachers for whom the student writes reports, presents laboratory findings and other assignments in the core courses.

In this connection, at least two main problems can be identified. On the one hand, many lecturers of science and technology subjects feel that their role is to teach their own subjects, while the duty of teaching the English language belongs to the language teacher. Consequently, even where the learner makes correctable performance errors, the non-

language teacher may not feel concerned enough to correct such errors, except perhaps in situations where such errors make meaningful communication difficult.

On the other hand, there have been known cases of outright objection by science and technology teachers to ESP. These objections can be explained in at least two ways. First is the fact that some of these teachers themselves suffer from a hangover from their own secondary school experience, when grammar and translation lessons were the order of the day. To now realize that grammar has become a matter of incidental attention in the curriculum of their students is, as far as such teachers are concerned, nothing short of a misplacement of priority on the part of the ESP teacher. Unfortunately too, and as if to add strength to the arguments of such non-ESP specialists, there seems to be significant controversy among linguists themselves about the legitimacy of ESP as a distinct area of linguistics (Porter 1976, Corbluth 1975, and Hutchinson and Waters 1980). It should not be surprising, therefore, if teachers of courses in science and technology insist that students be taught common core English curriculum in which grammar and translation are predominant, rather than specially designed subject-related ESP courses.

Another major reason for the antagonistic attitudes of some science and technology teachers to their ESP colleagues is the feeling that the latter are dabbling into an area where they know next to nothing. For some, the attempt by the ESP practitioner to help the student to acquire English through specialized subject-related topics such as thermodynamics, agronomy, anatomy and physiology does not seem as a way of shortening the process of learning by giving the students authentic subject-related topics. Rather, they consider this as an undue interference on the part of the ESP teacher in an area outside his basic training. Of course, while the ESP teacher must never pretend to be a specialist in any of such specialized subjects, the enterprise of English language teaching and learning as a necessary tool for acquiring such specialized knowledge will only benefit from a positive insight the specialist core subject

teacher can offer. It is in this connection that joint courses between ESP and other subject teachers are of great advantage to both sides, as well as for their students. Rather than being suspicious therefore, the science teacher and specialists in other disciplines ought to support the ESP practitioner.

6. ESP Materials

There is little doubt that more than half of the research papers and other publications in science and technology today are written in the English language (Swales 1987:42). The need to gain entry into the society of those educated in science and technology therefore demands that the student of science and technology must possess more than just a passing knowledge of English. For this to be achieved relevant materials suitable both in terms of the learning objectives and the context in which that learning is taking place are essential. Unfortunately, such materials are not easily available, and where they are, they may cost a fortune. For many developing linguistic communities, the heavy financial investment necessary for the production of such materials is simply impossible to bear. In the absence of such specially developed materials, many have resorted to the adoption, sometimes wholesale, of foreign materials which are hardly suitable for the purpose of the learning and the socio-cultural context of the learner. Such materials lack authenticity because they are not realistic in terms of the experience of the learners concerned (Strevens ibid:11). No matter how much such materials attempt to be communicative by covering a wide range of combinations of language skills, as long as the examples used to illustrate these skills are strange and non-existent in the real life experience of the learners, they lack authenticity and would therefore not achieve the desired goal. Worse still, since such materials and the activities they present do not give opportunities for realistic simulations or role plays, they run the risk of being trivialized by the learners.

The consequence of such adoption is all too well known to require details here. Apart from the attempt to transplant the learners into a social context foreign to their back-

ground, such materials often end up making the task of teaching and learning the language more laborious than they need be. For when foreign materials are introduced which have no relevance to the learners' socio-cultural psyche, such learners are faced not just with the task of language learning but also with the dilemma of reconciling the strange cultural setting with the reality of their own experience.

An example of the above was encountered in one of my classes recently when I asked a group of students in a course in supervision in engineering to imagine that they were the production manager of a company. They were asked to give instructions in English to a group of daily paid workers on how a particular machine should be operated and maintained. The response came quickly from one of the students who pointed out that he would not talk to such workers in English because it is odd to do so. Others agreed with him and pointed out that it would be more natural and effective to give instructions and explanations in Pidgin. This point may seem rather trivial, but the message of that reaction by my students is that my instruction was not real in natural communication at work. It therefore lacked the quality of a realistic simulation.

7. Class Size

Large class size is a well known problem for English language learning in developing nations and significant research activities have been undertaken to study the phenomenon (Coleman 1989 (a), (b), (c); Mcleod 1989; Locastro 1989; Allwright 1989 (a), (b); and Sarangi 1989). But while this problem may have originated in the secondary general English class room partly as a result of inadequate financing of education (Oladejo 1992), its advent in ESP seems to have a different background. In many colleges and universities where ESP is taught today, such courses are often located in support or service departments, rather than as part of the core departments of the institutions. As a result, ESP courses are often relegated to the status of subsidiary or second class subjects in many ways, even though English is the sole medium of instruction in many of such institutions. Consequently, parameters set in the learners' main courses such as Chemistry, Physics

and other science subjects are often imposed upon ESP courses, especially in terms of class size. It is not uncommon, for example, to find single tutorial classes in the region of twenty-five to thirty students in one ESP tutorial group, simply because the same number of students belong to the same laboratory group in their core courses.

Whereas, it might be perfectly normal to have a group of twenty to thirty students in the Physics laboratory at the same time, provided the facilities are adequate, the same is not advisable in an ESP class. To be adequate and effective, ESP teaching requires communicative interaction between the teacher and the students he teaches, so that he may be able to identify the individual and group needs in language and communication and respond to such needs. Yet, any effective and meaningful language activity such as role play and language simulation can only succeed in small groups. But where the group is too large the ESP teacher is helpless, and effective learning is naturally inhibited.

In addition, if the problems resulting from large classes in the secondary school include the inability of the teacher to properly monitor the individual learner's progress (Coleman ibid), then the magnitude of this problem for college and university ESP classes can only be higher, given the volume of work each student would be expected to undertake with the language, and the actual limitation imposed on contact between the ESP teacher and the learner by the time table.

8. Differences in ESP Practices

One other problem which has made ESP unsuccessful in many multilingual nations of the world is in the concept and practice of ESP itself. A point of argument in ESP has been whether it should focus only on subject related English language needs of learners, or whether it should also be concerned with other aspects of learning such as time management, study skills and preparation for examinations, which are not really central to the language. But while this question remains largely unresolved, and while ESP practitioners

follow in most cases such tradition as may be existing in the institutions where they teach, it is also true that many of the ESP courses today focus more on language than on communication skills, a practice akin to the grammar translation methodology of the 1950's.

The ESP practitioner is somehow to blame for this trend. For in many cases, courses are planned without adequate analysis of the learners' needs, while in some others, we impose our own perceptions and views on the reality of the context in which we teach. To investigate this problem further, I recently carried out a small scale survey in which ESP teachers at the University of Technology, Lae, Papua New Guinea, were asked to identify the extent to which they would focus teaching attention on certain areas of the language and communication courses which they teach. Although all the teachers who responded to the questionnaire teach students with similar cultural and academic backgrounds, and whose problems with the English language are also similar, if not exactly the same, the results show that the majority of the ESP teachers (85%) indicated that they would pay more attention to language skills than to communication skills. Yet, in this very situation, research has shown that the major problems the learners have in English is with communication skills: how to express themselves, especially orally, even with what they seem to know of the language (Kavana (ibid), Swan 1986). While skills such as reading comprehension, report writing, letter and memo writing, and use of the dictionary are ranked among those to be given very high teaching attention by the majority of the teacher respondents, only a few believe that oral communication skills such as seminar presentation, effective oral presentation, and pronunciation deserve much attention, even though the learners in this particular situation need more of the latter than the former.

9. Prospect

Given the numerous problems facing ESP in multilingual teaching and learning situations, some of which have been highlighted above, what then is the prospect of ESP in such nations, especially during this last decade of this century? Will ESP learn a lesson from

the experience of one time popular language teaching methodologies like the grammar translation method, and will it therefore address its problems in good time, or will it follow the path of its predecessors? Whichever turn ESP will take depends not on ESP itself as a concept or as a language teaching procedure, but on the practitioners of ESP. But one thing is certain, unless ESP can justify the amount of money and energy spent on it by these multilingual countries, most of which are currently at the receiving end of world's poverty, and unless some form of improvement can be found to ensure that consumers of ESP products, the labour market are given value for money, there is no doubt that ESP will face a hard time sooner than later.

It is pertinent to say that LSP rather than ESP may be a more natural, and probably cheaper option, which many of these multilingual societies will turn to in the face of continued failure of ESP to address the problems inherent in its practice in such societies. Two issues immediately call for serious attention. One is the need for ESP to meet the challenge posed by the use of English as the sole medium of instruction in higher education in multilingual English speaking countries and address the problems that arise as a result of that fact, some of which have already been discussed in this paper. Second, ESP cannot afford to continue to avoid the ultimate need to be more realistic in meeting the language and communication needs of the university graduate, whether at work or in other day-to-day activities. As has already been pointed out, these needs are currently met not by English alone but by a combination of English with other lingua franche, if not mainly by such lingua franche. In this connection, the opinion of Selinker (1988:33) that English teachers be open to a broader-based language for specific purposes rather than ESP alone becomes relevant. ESP practice in multilingual societies will have to incorporate within it some elements of LSP so as to be more realistic in meeting the demands placed upon language and communication by educated speakers of such societies. To continue to teach English alone as the sole focus of ESP will amount to self deception on the part of ESP and its practitioners who know that English alone is not what the multilin-

gual speaker actually calls upon in carrying out language and communication activities at work and in his society at large. Unless some steps are taken to make ESP come to terms with this reality, its relevance, particularly outside the classroom will soon be in doubt.

Although the problem discussed here may also be found among ESP students in L1 situations, the degree and intensity of it may not be the same as in L2 multilingual learning context. For while the learner in the L1 environment will naturally acquire the competence and language skills not covered in the subject specific ESP classroom through social interaction and continued daily use of English, the same assumption cannot be made of the learner in the multilingual L2 learning situation. For him, English is not only a poor L2 having to compete with other languages available to the learner, but also the real social communicative situations demanding the use of English are also very limited. So, the ESP student in the multilingual learning situation is impoverished in a way that his L1 counterpart is not, both in terms of the quality of the English language available to him and the quantity of the language actually demanded of him in normal day-to-day communication needs. Yet, it is also true that many of the ESP courses on offer today, as well as the materials for teaching them, are designed as if they are meant for native speakers or at best for second language speakers of English who are pursuing their studies in environments where the language is spoken as a mother tongue, where such learners would have access to more input in the language such as the classroom may not be able to provide.

10. An Alternative Approach

The foregoing problems call for an alternative approach to the practice of ESP in multilingual learning environments, not only in terms of materials selection and teaching activities, but also in respect of content, focus, and emphasis. ESP for the L2 learner in a multilingual context will have to be redefined, in terms of both contents and materials, in order to compensate for his low level of motivation to learn the English language, his cultural setting, his poor linguistic background in English, and even the teacher's own inadequacies.

Given the practice in many foreign language classrooms these days, ESP is too narrow in its focus by concentrating only on subject-specific language needs while neglecting the underlying competence, the knowledge that the student is supposed to possess for functional communication in society at large (Hutchinson and Waters 1980). Consequently, the graduate who has successfully done ESP courses seems often to have been prepared for the demands of study in the college or university only, and much less so for real life situations in the work place and in the society he/she belongs to. Such graduates seem to be unable to make necessary transfer of linguistic skills once they are outside of their specialized area of training. This explains why many employers complain about the inability of their graduate employees to perform adequately when required to carry out even work related language and communication tasks, and why such graduates have to be retrained to acquire communication skills which they were expected to have been exposed to as part of their college studies. In an investigation of language use by university graduates in Papua New Guinea and employers satisfaction with the communicative competence of such graduates, Swan (1986) finds that employers are generally not satisfied with their graduate employees' inability to carry out tasks such as report writing, oral communication, and letter writing. He reports further that, more often than not, Tok Pisin (PNG Pidgin) rather than English is adopted by the majority of the workers in communicating with colleagues in the field. A more recent survey by Moody (1993) also confirms Swan's findings. Moody (ibid) also reports that the majority of his respondents would use English exclusively only when communicating with a superior or when the other party does not speak any other language common to both. Otherwise, Pidgin alone or a combination of Pidgin and English (code mixing, code switching) would be adopted. All these go to show that course success does not necessarily mean discourse success for many ESP students (Briggs 1987).

It follows, therefore, that since the multilingual English speaker needs more than English

for academic purposes and for performing other day-to-day work-related communication activities, then language learning in such a context should reorientate itself towards equipping the speaker with the linguistic and communication skills required to meet these needs. To argue otherwise is to suggest that English language teaching activities in multilingual communities should be carried out just for the sake of it, and without due consideration of the users of the language and their needs.

In this connection, given the fact that other languages also play important roles in meeting the learner's language and communication needs, it will be necessary for any ESP course in a multilingual environment to devote attention not only to English but also to how the language interacts in actual use with other languages spoken by the multilingual users in meeting their communication needs (Markee 1986). In addition, the unresolved question of whether ESP should also concern itself with skills not central to English, such as study skills, examination skills, research, and public seminar presentation will have to be addressed such that these skills are incorporated into ESP course outlines in a multilingual context in order to meet the challenge posed by the use of English as the sole medium of formal education. In other words, although the main focus of LSP will continue to be English, this should be done only as a means of enabling the learner to make necessary transfer to other languages he may have to call upon in meeting his communication needs.

11. Conclusion

The foregoing suggestions should not be interpreted as a demand for the abolition of English teaching or of ESP for that matter in multilingual English speaking societies. Rather, it is a call for the modification of the practice of ESP in order to bring it in line with reality, so that the ESP learner's linguistic and communication needs will be adequately catered for and the experience of having done courses in ESP will be worth the time and effort given it by such learners. The learner needs English in order to access the modern world of science and technology, and in view of his need to communicate in the language so that he can express his knowledge to a larger English speaking audience

around the world. Any formal language acquisition exercise worth the money and time spent on it should serve as a medium of meeting the learner's language and communication needs. In order for ESP to adequately fit this description, it must incorporate significant features of LSP in multilingual contexts.

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